

Peace & Security Council Report

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SESSÃO EXTRAORDINÁRIA
DO CONSELHO EXECUTIVO
DA UNÃO AFRICANA



The AU's Luanda summit mustn't be another talk shop on peace
Africa's democracy charter at 20: signed, ratified and selectively implemented
Two key priorities for the AU's Luanda summit
Bridging the AU peace and human rights mandates
Beyond solidarity: Sahel security needs a regional strategy and support

The AU's Luanda summit mustn't be another talk shop on peace

The African Union (AU) extraordinary summit from 29 to 30 August 2026, under the auspices of Angola's President João Lourenço, will focus on strengthening mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution. The summit is an honest admission by African leaders that the African Peace and Security Architecture is struggling to prevent crises, mediate and enforce peace as it should.

President Lourenço was appointed in 2022 as the AU Champion for Peace and Reconciliation in Africa during the AU Special summit on terrorism and Unconstitutional changes of government (UCGs). Having served as the AU Chairperson in 2025, President Lourenço witnessed the broader AU's limitations in collective response, thereby finding it imperative to rejuvenate AU response mechanisms.

Eighteen extraordinary summits reflect AU's desire to counter security threats, yet targets are repeatedly missed

Conflict prevention and resolution are central to AU deliberations and are discussed at every summit since the AU's inception in 2002. The Peace and Security Council holds at least five meetings a month on security topics and response mechanisms, including its working methods. Most AU extraordinary summits are also focused on peace and security issues reflecting its key impact on Africa's developmental prospects.

The AU has held 18 extraordinary summits between 2004 and 2026. Agendas spanned topics on AU institutional and financial reform,

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACDEG	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	CADSP	Common African Defence and Security Policy
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights	DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
AES	Alliance of Sahel States	ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
AGA	African Governance Architecture	FLA	Azawad Liberation Front
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism	JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture	PSC	Peace and Security Council
AU	African Union	REC	Regional economic community
AUC	AU Commission	SADC	Southern African Development Community
		UCG	Unconstitutional change of government

continental trade integration through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement launch, humanitarian crises, terrorism UCGs, public health and peace and security frameworks. Nine of these summits were in response to peace, security and governance issues and the mechanisms needed to address them.

An analysis of these events reflects the AU's desire to resolve threats but shows how it continually misses its targets.

Making peace happen

The first peace- and security-themed session in February 2004 adopted the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy, which defined shared continental threats.

The August 2009 summit in Tripoli was one of the first sessions at which African leaders discussed how to eliminate African conflicts and promote sustainable peace. The summit was motivated by concerns over recurring conflicts and resurgence of UCGs particularly in Mauritania (2008), Guinea (2008) and Madagascar (2009), a situation evident in current trends.

That summit came roughly two years before the Arab Spring that led to the overthrows of some governments in North Africa including the killing of Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi. Its outcome was the Tripoli Declaration on the elimination of conflicts in Africa and the promotion of sustainable peace. The declaration and its action plan proclaimed 2010 the year of peace and security and resulted in the launch of the AU Make Peace Happen campaign to coincide with International Peace Day on 21 September. The 2013 and 2016 extraordinary summits covered tense relationships with the International Criminal Court and maritime security, respectively (see Chart 1).

Merger to foster linkages

The 11th extraordinary session on AU institutional reform in 2018 was built on the AU reform process of 2017. The reform seeks a whole-of-organisation transformation towards effectiveness across a broad range of AU priorities, including peace and security. This officially merged the political affairs and peace and security departments into one. This sought to foster linkages between conflict prevention and resolution through a single department that ensures political issues are resolved before they escalate into security threats.

Silencing the guns

The December 2020 14th extraordinary summit focused on silencing the guns, as the AU failed to meet its target of a peaceful continent by 2020. The agenda was launched in 2017, about a decade after the Tripoli Declaration and Make Peace Happen campaign and has subsequently been extended to 2030 with two-yearly reviews.

A key campaign born of silencing the guns is AU Amnesty Month (September) for voluntary return of illicit arms. Yet very few countries have

Current PSC Chairperson

H.E. Ambassador

Dr Mohamed Khaled,

Permanent Representative of
Algeria to the African Union and
PSC Chairperson for August 2026

PSC members

Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Côte
d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of
the Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia,
Gabon, Lesotho, Morocco,
Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia,
South Africa, and Uganda

Chart 1: AU extraordinary summits for peace

Date	Topic	Host	Major decisions and follow-through
February 2004	Second extraordinary session of the AU Assembly	Sirte, Libya	- Adopted the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy, defining common continental threats - Laid the way for the Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact adopted in 2005
August 2009	Special session on the consideration and resolution of conflicts in Africa	Tripoli, Libya	- Adopted the Tripoli Declaration and action plan - Proclaimed 2010 the year of peace and security - Committed member states to resource the AU Peace Fund and fully operationalise the African Peace and Security Architecture
October 2013	Extraordinary session on Africa's relationship with the International Criminal Court	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	- Resolved that no sitting AU head of state nor government should appear before any international court during his or her tenure - Accelerated the push for criminal jurisdiction for the African Court, culminating in the 2014 Malabo Protocol on immunity for heads of state and senior state officials
October 2016	Extraordinary session on maritime security and safety and development in Africa	Lomé, Togo	Adopted the African Charter on Maritime Security and Safety and Development (Lomé Charter)
November 2018	11 th extraordinary session on AU institutional reform	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	- Adopted the reform package flowing from the Kagame report - Merger of the political affairs and peace and security portfolios into the Political Affairs and Peace and Security department - Reformed senior leadership selection process
6 December 2020	14 th extraordinary session on silencing the guns in Africa	Virtual (under South Africa's chairship)	- Adopted the Johannesburg Declaration on Silencing the Guns, extending the master roadmap from 2020 to 2030 with two-yearly reviews - Welcomed steps towards African Standby Force operationalisation
27 May 2022	15 th extraordinary humanitarian summit and pledging conference	Malabo, Equatorial Guinea	- Adopted the Malabo Declaration, which called for pledges for humanitarian response - Directed the operationalisation of the African Humanitarian Agency
28 May 2022	16 th extraordinary session on terrorism and UCGs	Malabo, Equatorial Guinea	- Adopted the Malabo Declaration on terrorism and UCGs, reaffirming zero tolerance for coups - Directed full functionality of the African Standby Force and the establishment under its auspices of a counter-terrorism special unit
29 to 30 August 2026	Extraordinary summit on strengthening mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution in Africa	Luanda, Angola	Upcoming

Source: PSC Report

implemented this. Today's protracted armed conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic are complex, requiring adaptive and decisive responses. External actors are increasingly becoming key mediators in crises.

Coups and violent extremism

Despite the departments' merger, the number of UCGs rose rapidly between 2019 and 2025. This exacerbated political instability and insecurity, as seen in the Sahel, where political legitimacy is contested while terrorists and armed rebellion thrive amid military-focused solutions.

As a result, the AU held its 16th extraordinary summit on terrorism and UCGs in Malabo on 28 May 2022. African leaders adopted a declaration that reaffirmed their commitment to democratic values. This was after the multistakeholder reflection forum on UCGs on 17 March 2022, at which the Accra Declaration on UCGs was adopted.

AU policy reforms have not translated into an AU that is capable of addressing conflicts and their causes

The 16th extraordinary summit also addressed the rise of violent extremism beyond al-Shabaab extremism in Somalia. Al-Qaeda and Islamic affiliates in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin and the Islamic-linked group in Mozambique are significant threats to continental security.

In July 2026, the AU adopted the Continental Strategic Plan of Action on Countering Terrorism in Africa 2026 to 2030, which was proposed during the 2022 Malabo summit. This is envisaged as a unified roadmap to tackle expanding extremist threats, illicit financing and emerging technological tactics. However, the AU has yet to establish the African Standby Force's counter-terrorism unit mooted in 2020 when the force was declared fully operational and reinforced at the 2022 summit.

Luanda prospects

The outcomes of past AU special summits on peace reflect both the desire for a peaceful continent and the need to implement long-standing commitments. Yet, the AU continues to suffer from limited influence in actual conflict contexts. AU institutional and policy reforms have not yielded an organisation capable of addressing causes and manifestations of conflicts, including governance issues.

In Luanda, African leaders could turn the tables, but not through tokenism. Instead of re-committing to norms and mechanisms and calling for reviews of policy documents, the gathering must determine how African leaders can achieve success through existing frameworks and mechanisms. The answers lie predominantly in the willingness of AU member states to consistently back AU decisions and interventions.

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Amnesty
Month

FOR VOLUNTARY RETURN
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Africa's democracy charter at 20: signed, ratified and selectively implemented

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) turns 20 in 2027. Adopted in 2007 and in force since 2012, it remains the continent's principal framework for credible elections, constitutionalism and the rule of law. It is also a conflict prevention instrument, giving the AU a basis to identify governance deficits before they escalate into instability.

Yet the charter faces a persistent implementation gap. Forty-six member states have signed it and 39 have ratified or deposited it, but only Togo, in 2017, and Rwanda, in 2019, have submitted the reports required every two years under Article 49.

Two reports in 14 years expose the charter's core weakness: governments can endorse its principles without being held to them.

The designation of 2028 as the AU's year of human rights, democracy and governance, a year after the anniversary, offers a chance to close that gap. The May 2025 Nairobi capacity-building workshop and the Burayu Declaration from the April 2026 joint retreat between the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) provide a foundation. Turning that momentum into results will take more than new ratifications. It needs stronger implementation, reporting, monitoring and accountability.

The reporting gap

Article 49 requires state parties to report to the AU Commission on the legislative and other measures taken to give effect to the charter. Initial reports establish a baseline covering constitutional, legislative, administrative and institutional measures. Periodic reports, due every two years, assess progress, challenges, gaps and technical support needs.

These are not administrative formalities. Reporting is how the AU learns whether continental governance norms are reaching national practice. The near-total absence of reports is therefore more than a compliance problem. It leaves the AU without a systematic way to assess implementation or detect emerging governance deficits.

That matters most for the PSC. Democratic backsliding, contested constitutional changes, restrictions on political participation and weak electoral institutions generate tensions that later reach the Council as peace and security crises. Without governance information collected regularly, opportunities for preventive action pass unnoticed. The harder questions are what follows when states report, and what happens when they do not?

Ratification is not the whole problem

Non-ratification by Botswana and Morocco, and the lack of progress of signatories including Tunisia, remain concerns. But continental democracy trends show that non-ratification alone does not explain the charter's limited impact.

The lesson: neither ratification nor reporting guarantee democratic accountability

Botswana illustrates the paradox. As of mid-2026 it had neither signed nor ratified ACDEG, yet it ranks among Africa's strongest democracies in the Economist Intelligence Unit's 2025 Democracy Index. Rwanda and Togo, the only two state parties to have reported under Article 49, rank consistently lower and face significant concerns over democratic governance. The lesson is not that ratification and reporting are irrelevant, but that neither guarantees democratic accountability.

Governments can increasingly sidestep continental governance norms without meaningful consequence. A state can remain outside the charter, as Botswana has, or comply formally with its reporting requirements while democratic practice deteriorates, as in Rwanda and Togo. What matters is less the number of signatures than whether ACDEG creates incentives to comply – which puts its accountability mechanism at the centre of the problem.

Why ACDEG still matters

Weak implementation should not obscure what the charter achieves. Building on the 2000 Lomé Declaration,

Chart 2: ACDEG obligations for member states

Obligation	Source	Details	Frequency/format
Submit report on legislative or other measures giving effect to charter principles and commitments	Article 49(1)	Report to the AU Commission	Every two years (from entry into force of the charter for the state party)
Submit a copy of the report to relevant AU organs	Article 49(2)	Action against mandates	Every two years
Initial report	Guidelines for state parties' reports (annex to rules of procedure of the African Governance Platform)	Baseline report covering constitutional, legislative, administrative and institutional measures, data, challenges, gaps, lessons, technical support needs, multistakeholder consultations, charter dissemination	Once (after ratification). Maximum 80 pages
Periodic reports	Guidelines for state parties' reports (annex to rules of procedure of the African Governance Platform)	Progress on previous recommendations, updates on measures taken, challenges overcome, new legislative/administrative changes, consultations, gaps/opportunities, technical support needs	Every two years after the initial report. Maximum 40 pages
Commission synthesised report	Article 49(3)	AU Commission prepares a synthesised report on overall implementation	Submitted to the AU Assembly through the executive council
Assembly follow-up	Article 49(4)	Assembly takes appropriate measures on issues raised	As needed

Source: PSC Report

it established a firmer continental basis for preventing military coups and defending constitutional order.

Its provisions allow the AU to distinguish legitimate political transitions from attempts to circumvent democratic norms. Even actors overturning constitutional order have taken care to present their actions as consistent with continental norms. Others rely on legal and constitutional manoeuvres – 'lawfare' – to undermine democratic competition without staging a conventional military coup.

Without ACDEG, the AU would have a weaker normative basis for challenging unconstitutional changes of government. The problem is not the charter's relevance, but the widening gap between normative commitment and political consequence especially on issues relating to constitutional manipulation and democratic backsliding.

Connecting governance monitoring to prevention

The April 2026 APRM-PSC joint retreat and the resulting Burayu Declaration strengthened the link between governance assessment, early warning and preventive diplomacy. Its emphasis on closer engagement between the two bodies is meant to push governance information more systematically into the PSC's conflict prevention work.

AU Assembly decision 978 on the state of peace and security points the same way. It calls for early pre-election technical deployments, the operationalisation of prevention action cells, and stronger integration of a human-rights-based approach into the Continental Early Warning System.

ACDEG reporting should therefore be treated as part of the AU's early warning architecture, not as a standalone governance obligation.

Making 2028 a compliance milestone

The year of human rights, democracy and governance is a political opportunity to close the accountability gap. Rather than celebrating the charter's normative achievements, 2028 should set a measurable implementation benchmark and mark the start of a compliance culture in which governments cannot endorse continental democratic norms while avoiding them.

Reporting must trigger structured follow-up rather than disappear into an administrative process. That requires coherence across existing governance mechanisms

The AU should also clarify what happens when member states fail to report or implement. Reporting must trigger structured follow-up rather than disappear into an administrative process. That requires coherence across existing governance mechanisms. Member states already report to both the APRM and ACDEG, and streamlining would cut duplication, lighten the burden, and let governance findings circulate between the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

Recommendations

- Ratified states should designate more focal points and work more closely with the AGA-APSA secretariat on initial reports. Signatories and non-ratifiers should draw on the secretariat and on reporting states for knowledge sharing, and address the internal bottlenecks holding up signature and ratification.
- The AU Commission and the AGA-APSA secretariat should operationalise ACDEG evaluation mechanisms, finalise user-friendly reporting guidelines, and publish an Article 49 scorecard benchmarking state parties' reporting, domestication and implementation. Technical support and capacity-building should extend to non-ratifiers and signatories, not only to reporting states.
- The PSC and APRM should translate governance assessments into preventive diplomacy and early warning more systematically. Implementing the Burayu Declaration should prioritise routine sharing of governance findings with the PSC, particularly ahead of elections and during constitutional or political uncertainty.
- Regional economic communities should drive domestication at regional level, facilitate peer learning and align implementation support with the AGA.

2028

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Two key priorities for the AU's Luanda summit

The AU summit on strengthening mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, scheduled for 29 to 30 August 2026, is an invaluable opportunity for reinvigoration of AU capacity for collective security. While mechanisms are crucial, the AU's actual influence lies in the willingness to act collectively and back its mechanisms in line with the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP) adopted two decades ago. This policy highlights the indivisibility of African security, which requires African states to share response to threats rather than treating them as the responsibility of the affected state.

These terms were further codified in the AU Non-aggression and Common Defence Pact of 2005. Article 1c of the pact maintains that any aggression or threat of aggression against any member state shall be deemed to constitute a threat or aggression against all member states.

CADSP and the pact are not similar to the automatic North Atlantic Treaty Organisation-style collective defence clause (Article 5), in which members send troops when one of their own is under threat. But the CADSP and the pact require members to act collectively through the AU and its PSC, a framework that defines the concepts 'Pan-Africanism' and 'African solutions to African problems'.

As the continent struggles to address security threats, leaders must consider the pitfalls of backtracking on collective security and regain member states' interest in the approach. Hence, the dual AU priorities in Luanda must address fragmentation and seek a unified response.

Collective backing

Over the past decade, collective responses in Africa have suffered from growing nationalism. While national interests are the foundations of a realist world order, rising apathy and reluctance to intervene in the internal affairs of member states run counter to CADSP-defined interconnected security threats.

Currently, the AU and regional economic communities (RECs) seem hamstrung, not for lack of mechanisms and frameworks, but due to limited member-state

backing for AU decisions and interventions. Since 2016, the AU has suggested that appropriately streamlined mechanisms, institutions and frameworks can achieve peace in Africa. Yet the dynamics of multilateral peace infrastructures, including United Nations systems, show that multilateral bodies are successful only when decisions and interventions are actively backed by member states, especially those with influence over the conflict parties.

The United Nations, for instance, is only able to mediate in the Libyan crisis and the Western Sahara issue with the support of influential United Nations Security Council members, especially the P5. Due to limited influence of the AU and the PSC, the AU has been unable for a decade to lead a national reconciliation dialogue among rival parties in Libya.

Leaders must reflect on the pitfalls of backtracking on collective security and regain interest in a unified response

In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, cessation of hostilities was achieved not so much through Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) mechanisms but through the willingness of influential countries such as Nigeria to press and sacrifice for peace. Similarly, the successes of the AU and RECs in conflicts such as the unravelling South Sudan revitalised peace deal of 2018 were possible only when regional mediators were backed by threats of PSC and United Nations Security Council sanctions.

Conflict persists when warring parties see divisions and a lack of unity among regional bodies such as the AU and Intergovernmental Authority on Development, including members' reluctance to push for peace. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan, the AU and RECs seem to lack leverage over the warring parties, beyond hoping that goodwill prevails or external partners exert pressure for peace. Mechanisms and frameworks exist to intervene in these countries, but there is limited backing from influential members for sanctions and decisive action on the belligerents.

In the Congo crisis, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have conducted suboptimal, halfhearted military campaigns against M23 rebel activity that have had little impact on the status quo. While the AU is mediating, its influence is constrained by divisions among RECs and by its inability to unify the RECs' approaches.

Collective response by RECs and the AU could have mitigated the involvement of neighbouring countries that undermine the country's territorial integrity. CADSP and the pact require member states to refrain from aggression against fellow members, in line with Article 4(a & g) of the AU Constitutive Act. Members are also to ensure that their national territory is not used as a base for aggression or subversion against another African state.

Fragmentation trap

The Luanda summit should encourage AU members to develop a unified response that does not abandon affected states as they seek solutions to their crises. Reaction to violent extremism reveals the extent to which the AU and RECs tend to encourage fragmented responses that reduce the optimal capacity of Africa's collective response.

The AU sought to address the Sahel extremism problem through the Nouakchott Process, but failed to go beyond pledges of solidarity and promises of deploying a force

Initially, al-Shabaab posed the most significant threat in Africa. The two-decade-long consistent AU and Intergovernmental Authority on Development effort helped contain the threat in Somalia and sustain the Somalia transitional government and subsequent elected governments. While the AU Somalia missions are severely constrained financially and operationally, the collective AU effort since 2006, including the role of neighbouring countries, has hindered al-Shabaab's expansion.

The Sahel situation is different. When violent extremism gained a foothold in Mali following the 2012/2013 Tuareg rebellion, the AU and ECOWAS struggled to deploy the African-led International Support Mission to Mali. This stemmed from political tensions between the two African Peace and Security Architecture stakeholders. After six months, the mission was taken over by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali. Meanwhile, the extremists continued to expand beyond Mali into Burkina Faso and Niger. By 2017, al-Qaeda-affiliated groups in the Sahel had formed the Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin alliance.

The AU, which sought to address the problem through the Nouakchott Process, failed to go beyond pledges of solidarity and promises of deploying a force in the region, as decided in 2015. As the 11-member Nouakchott



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Process seemed reluctant, the affected members established the now-defunct G5 Sahel Force, a weak ad hoc mechanism, rather than an optimal collective African response. Neither the AU nor ECOWAS provided funding nor troops required to support the force.

Extremism has since moved beyond the Sahel, affecting coastal countries, especially Benin, Togo and Nigeria, with an increasing convergence with Lake Chad Basin extremists. In response, affected members launched the Accra Initiative. Similarly, the Boko Haram threat is addressed by a fragment of APSA, the Multinational Joint Task Force Against Boko Haram, while the AU secures external financing for the mission.

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In Mozambique, SADC responded to the rise of extremist groups in Cabo Delgado by deploying the SADC Mission in Mozambique in July 2021. As funding and logistical constraints became increasingly apparent, the body sought greater support from the AU, which endorsed the deployment in January 2022, providing financial and military assistance.

Although SADC began phasing out the mission in December 2023 and completed it by July 2024, the intervention did not resolve the insurgency. Since then, no other collective African force has been deployed, although Rwanda has continued its bilateral military support of Mozambique.

The hope for Luanda

AU members must adhere to CADSP and the pact: a threat against one is a threat against all. This requires that members amplify AU prevention and mediation initiatives by offering economic, political and military leverage needed for success. This means that member states, via the PSC and AU Assembly, should, for instance, impose sanctions on spoilers of peace.

In this vein, Uganda and Kenya must act against antagonists in South Sudan, including freezing the assets of warring parties, without becoming bogged down by concerns about the economic implications for their countries. The incentive is the durable peace that such sanctions could bring to the region and neighbouring countries.

In line with the aspirations of the African Economic Community, the AU and RECs must set aside their organisational interests and work jointly, pooling resources to achieve optimal impact in crisis areas. The ASF framework is operationally ready, but the AU and RECs haven't committed the required finance and will to deploy it where needed. Additionally, AU and REC interventions should be less about who leads and more about projecting a joint show of force and unity of purpose.



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Bridging the AU peace and human rights mandates

On 21 August, the PSC held a virtual consultation with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). The annual exchange aims to integrate a human rights dimension into the Council's work.

As respect for the rule of law erodes amid a faltering global order, and civilians bear the cost of increasingly authoritarian regimes, linkages among AU organs are critical for justice and peace. The session was an opportunity to assess how effectively the two bodies are delivering on their shared mandate to promote and protect human rights.

The PSC and ACHPR in recent times

Article 19 of the PSC Protocol provides the legal foundation for the relationship, requiring the Council to cooperate closely with the Commission. It envisages the ACHPR providing human rights expertise, information and analysis, while the PSC deploys the tools of APSA to respond to situations the commission identifies. In effect, Article 19 links APSA to the African human rights system.

Yet this potentially powerful partnership remains only partially institutionalised. Despite recent progress, cooperation often hinges on crises, personalities and politics rather than predictable joint action.

Long overlooked, the relationship has regained prominence because of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sudan. In its 1 218th communiqué in June 2024, the Council asked the AU Commission (AUC) and the ACHPR to investigate and recommend practical measures to protect civilians.

This culminated in a joint fact-finding mission on the human rights situation in Sudan. Its 107-page report documents only a fraction of widespread abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence and violations of the rights to life, dignity, freedom of movement and other fundamental freedoms.

But implementation has stalled, as many of the recommended actions fall to AU structures – including the PSC and ACHPR – with limited follow-up and enforcement capacity. The AU must use the tools at its disposal, not only in Sudan but in every member state where recurrent human rights abuses undermine development, peace and security.

Coordination gaps

The PSC's 866th communiqué in 2019 made consultations with the ACHPR statutory. It also set out measures to deepen the relationship, including regular human rights briefings, routine interaction between the two bodies' chairs, and making human rights a standing item on the PSC agenda. Many of these are yet to be implemented.

The June and August 2026 followed a prolonged hiatus. In formal exchanges, which drew criticism from key continental actors. Although both bodies continued to pursue their mandates, information sharing, early warning and responses to mass human rights violations remained limited. Sudan is the only current conflict in which a PSC mandate has prompted a joint ACHPR–AUC mission.

The PSC's ability to resolve issues is weakened as impunity often breeds cyclical conflicts

The coordination gap is substantive, not merely procedural. In April 2026, the PSC conducted a field mission to South Sudan to assess political tensions ahead of scheduled elections. Despite intercommunal violence, killings and arbitrary detentions, the mission had no human rights mandate and no ACHPR focal point.

Similarly, the ACHPR undertook promotional missions to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe in 2026 without consultation or coordination with the AUC.

Such misalignment has consequences beyond the institutions themselves. Rights violations and impunity breed cyclical conflict and weaken the Council's ability to resolve crises. Pursued in silos, the PSC and ACHPR mandates neglect the human rights dimension of peace and security, fragmenting rather than integrating the AU's peace and security and human rights architectures.

Enhanced coordination and synergy

There is room for more institutionalised and enhanced collaboration between the PSC and ACHPR.

Communiqué 866 regularised meetings and consultations, but technical joint assessments, country or crisis missions, early warning information exchange and establishment of a permanent PSC-ACHPR coordination and follow-up mechanism will prove invaluable.

First, such measures will concretise a human-rights approach to conflict prevention and mitigation. Understanding how accountability can prevent or mitigate conflict and instability will enhance the work of the PSC and AUC. Secondly, these mechanisms will streamline and coalesce comprehensive, multipronged technical missions for the AU. This will enhance the way the AU functions by providing a better understanding of the entities' functions, challenges, constraints and entry points for collaboration.

The challenge is not the absence of legal authority but a failure to create consistent operational mechanisms to transform human rights analysis into timely political action

Thirdly, structural integration may help to overcome the PSC and ACHPR decision-making and implementation deficit. Both entities have sub-committees and working groups that could benefit from information exchange and flow.

The joint fact-finding mission set a good precedent for the PSC/AUC and ACHPR to provide a comprehensive, systematic and integrated AU approach to the Sudan conflict. However, this mission could be replicated and extended to the DRC and South Sudan. There is ample opportunity to structure this collaboration to guarantee that human rights and security are not separate institutional domains. This would be contrary to the trend of current conflicts driven by identity- or ethnic-based exclusion, repression and impunity.

The PSC and ACHPR complementary mandates should make them natural partners. Article 19 of the PSC protocol provides for a relationship in which human rights information informs conflict prevention and peacebuilding, while the PSC's political authority strengthens the practical impact of human rights protection.

Current collaboration in consultations, fact-finding, conflict prevention and responses to governance crises demonstrates meaningful progress. However, the relationship remains fragmented. The challenge is not the absence of legal authority but a failure to create consistent operational mechanisms to transform human rights analysis into timely political action.

Strengthening this relationship is a legal necessity and a policy imperative. The long-term credibility of the AU's peace and security architecture depends on its ability to demonstrate that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without human rights, accountability, justice and inclusive governance.

Article 19

OF THE PSC PROTOCOL
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INFORMATION INFORMS
CONFLICT PREVENTION
AND PEACEBUILDING

Beyond solidarity: Sahel security needs regional strategy and support

Recent attacks in central Sahel are evidence of the growing terror threat in West Africa. This demands more from the region's states and partners than declarations of solidarity with those affected. Security cooperation is urgently needed with Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger – the three countries of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES).

Extremist and rebel alliances

On 25 April, the al-Qaeda-affiliated Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the separatist Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) launched coordinated attacks on several cities in northern, central and southern Mali. This was the most ambitious operation by the armed groups since the outbreak of the Malian security crisis in 2012. Defence Minister Sadio Camara was killed and insurgents seized the northern towns of Kidal and Tessalit.

On 4 July, the FLA-JNIM coalition replicated its synchronised offensive in six regions of the country. Although the Malian Armed Forces contained most of the attacks, the insurgents seized part of Anéfis in the north, prompting the force and its Russian partner, Africa Corps, to entrench themselves in their military base. After six days of intense fighting, the two suppressed the offensive and retook Anéfis. The events suggest that the FLA-JNIM alliance is part of a more structured operational complementarity. The two groups pool their in-depth knowledge of the field and their local networks.

FLA is more active in the north, while JNIM brings its experience in asymmetric warfare to the central, western and southern regions. The two also conduct complex, coordinated operations, such as on 1 July last year, when seven simultaneous attacks took place in the west of the country. At the same time, they targeted the economic corridors leading to Bamako to block or disrupt commercial traffic.

A gradual erosion of state authority

While the FLA-JNIM coalition is disrupting security in Mali, bold, collective attacks are also unfolding in the other two AES countries. On 30 June, Burkina Faso's

armed forces announced that they had thwarted 'complex and coordinated' attacks by terrorist groups in the east and north of the country.

In Niger, the army repelled two attacks against Niamey's Diori Hamani International Airport. The first, on 28 January this year, was claimed by Islamic State Sahel Province and the second, on 18 June, by JNIM. Rising numbers of collaborative operations on several fronts, targeting of strategic infrastructure, use of more sophisticated technologies (particularly commercial drones) and assassinations of leaders have reconfigured the terror threat.

Armed groups are challenging Sahelian states' authority and possibly creating conditions for their overthrow

By showing governments' inability to protect their people, the armed groups are challenging the foundations of Sahelian states' authority and possibly creating conditions for their overthrow. While a jihadist group is unlikely to take over a government in the short term, the risk cannot be ruled out. Such a scenario would have major consequences not only for the Sahel but for West Africa and beyond.

Beyond solidarity

The gradual expansion of armed groups into coastal countries, particularly northern Benin and Togo, with JNIM's disruptions of trade corridors, indicates a risk of regionalised terrorism. Repercussions could extend from security to trade flows and international interests.

The April attacks in Mali sparked a wave of official statements of support. Neighbouring states including Senegal, Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco and Benin condemned the incidents and reaffirmed their support for Mali. ECOWAS and the AU also denounced the violence and called for action. Beyond Africa, the European Union, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia voiced their concern and stressed their support for Mali's authorities.

The AU has, however, emerged as the main institutional source of support. It was the only organisation that decried the 4 July attacks in Mali and those in January and June in Niger. Algeria, which enjoys good relations with Niger, was the only neighbouring country to express its 'deep indignation' and full solidarity with the Nigerien government and people.

While these sentiments are encouraging, they should be accompanied by more meaningful engagement. Diplomatic developments could assist. These include the recent rapprochement between Mali and Algeria and between Niger and Benin. Senegal has positive relations with the AES countries and could use its presidency of ECOWAS and its role as chair of the ECOWAS Commission to enhance security cooperation. Constructive engagements by Togo and Ghana with the central Sahel states are also significant, as is strengthening dialogue between the AU Commission and AES members.

Towards a regionalised response

At least two actions should be prioritised. First, military coordination and intelligence-sharing mechanisms between security officers would address the management of border incidents and cross-border threats, while reducing the risk of diplomatic crises. Secondly, the AU, which recently strengthened its engagement with AES countries, has a diplomatic window to broker dialogue. In an environment characterised by fragmented traditional cooperation frameworks, the AU remains a credible platform to maintain dialogue with all states, preserving a continental perspective on peace and security challenges and supporting African-led cooperation.

The AU needs to work with regional peace initiatives and revitalise the Nouakchott Process to prevent the Sahel from reaching a security tipping point

The AU could rely on its strategic instrument, the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel, established in 2013, to play this political role more effectively. This would require bolstering the mission's mandate and enhancing its human, financial and operational capacities to ensure they are commensurate with its evolving political responsibilities.

The AU could seek support for regional peace initiatives from the United Nations under Resolution 2719, which authorises financing of peace support operations in Africa. Better relations between Bamako and Algiers may also revitalise the Nouakchott Process, a cooperation mechanism founded in 2013 to combat terrorism. The process brings together Algeria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Senegal, but could be expanded to include Togo, Ghana and Benin. Preventing the Sahel from reaching a security tipping point is imperative for preserving stability across West Africa.

Nouakchott Process

A COOPERATION
MECHANISM FOUNDED
IN 2013 TO COMBAT
TERRORISM

About the PSC Report

The *Peace and Security Council Report* analyses developments and decisions at the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC). The monthly publication is the only one of its kind dedicated to providing current analysis of the PSC's work. It is written by a team of ISS analysts in Addis Ababa.

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